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ORIGIN AND VALIDITY IN RELIGION

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I. INTRODUCTORY

What is the present attitude of the Christian theologian toward the study of anthropological origins in their bearing on the history of religion? Even if it be circumspect rather than cordial, it is at any rate no longer actively hostile, as half a century ago it used to be. Thus the first attempt to found the Anthropological Society of Paris in 1846 was rendered futile by the church-supporting government of the day. Even when finally in 1859, the year of the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, such a society was duly constituted, its illustrious founder Broca was formally bound over to keep the discussions within orthodox limits, a police agent actually attending the sittings so as to enforce this stipulation.¹ But the progress of time has brought about a welcome change of spirit. Today I find myself invited as an anthropologist to make a statement in a periodical devoted to theology concerning the anthropological view of religion. The assumption clearly is that it may be fruitfully combined with the theological view; else why be at pains to consider it here at all? In short, sympathy is proffered in place of the old-world antipathy. The time is evidently ripe for trying to determine how, and to what extent, we anthropologists and theologians can help one another, while none the less remaining true to our several methods and aims.

Of course we have our several prejudices also. They may not be those of fifty years ago, but even so they are doubtless strong enough to count for a good deal. As an anthropologist, however, who has tried to take stock of the complex human impulses for which the word "prejudice" stands, I must confess to a certain respect for prejudice, as one of the major forces that move the world of men. Regarding it from this point of view, one's utmost hope is to see it,

¹ Cf. *Athenaeum*, July 24, 1909, p. 103.

not eradicated, but transformed. Prejudices have only to be purged by criticism, and they become principles; all principles being in the last resort, as I at least am inclined to believe, attitudes of faith, rather than expressions of pure reason, whatever that may be. Now there is at least one prejudice that the theologian and the anthropologist have in common, and that is the love of truth. The very nerve of science consists in the will to believe only the truth. Religion too is surely bound to regard this as the only genuine "will to believe." This cardinal prejudice, however, stands in need of critical confirmation if it is to acquire the enhanced authority of a principle. A thoroughly enlightened pursuit of truth—that, one feels, would bring theologian and anthropologist once for all into line. The end is plain enough. The difficulty is how to attain it.

Now it is notorious that philosophers are all in a maze about the nature of truth. Yet it is their business, I suppose, to co-ordinate the intellectual activities of man by exhibiting truth as a crystal of many facets which each departmental study may aspire to illuminate from a different side. Are we to wait, involved in controversy and confusion of spirit, until they are in a position to tell us what truth is? It would seem the sounder policy that each should play the philosopher for himself so far as to try to make clear the aspect in which truth is revealed to him through his special researches. This, then, I shall endeavor to do, speaking from the anthropological point of view. Let the theologian in his turn do the same from his distinct, and undoubtedly more comprehensive, point of view. Thereupon we shall have pooled our notions of truth, as it were; and the result must assuredly be to bring us nearer together.

So much then for the ultimate orientation of the present inquiry. I have insisted on the need of agreeing at the outset to will the truth and the truth only, because, though this may sound a platitude, it is really nothing of the sort. Few educated persons, it may be, would be ready to sacrifice truth to personal convenience. But most of us are cowards when it is a question of setting truth above social convenience. I do not say that truth and convenience, whether personal or social, are ultimately opposed. But it is obvious that the social convenience of the moment is at constant war with the tendency, manifested by the best minds of every

nation and age, to be honest with themselves at all costs. The impulse that bids such noble spirits manfully to refuse to cling to illusions cannot itself be an illusion. The last stronghold of faith is here—in the conviction that life is not a lie. So far then as we have this faith in common, there cannot be any final parting of the ways as between anthropologist and theologian. Whatever be our temporary versions of the truth, truth in itself must be one for all.

II. DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

The nature of the question before us is suitably expressed by means of an antithesis which is currently employed by philosophers in this as in many a similar context.¹ Let Origin represent the standpoint of the anthropologist, and Validity the standpoint of the theologian. It will be necessary to consider these terms apart before proceeding to ask how, if at all, they may be taken together, may be harmonized according to a higher synthesis.

a) *Meaning of Origin.*—Origin, of course, means beginning, and beginning is a relative term, at any rate so far as it applies to whatever is conditioned by time and change. Since absolute beginnings fall outside the sphere of the anthropologist, it follows that he may treat any former state of the thing under investigation as its original condition, according to the needs of a given inquiry. Since he can never complete the infinite regress, he can but proceed thus or thus far in his search for the primitive, as speculative interest dictates or evidential opportunity allows. Origin, then, covers all previous history, any chapter in that history serving as a possible starting-point. In short, Origin, as it concerns the anthropologist, presides over the use of the past tense of the verb "to be," however wide be that use or however restricted.

Besides this merely historical meaning of the term Origin, there is another which is so intimately associated with it that the two are in practice usually confused. From signifying "beginning," origin slips imperceptibly into meaning "cause"; though whenever we say origin in the place of cause we are employing the

¹ See, for instance, my essay, "Origin and Validity in Ethics," in *Personal Idealism*, ed. H. Sturt, London, 1902, to which the present paper is intended to provide a sequel.

looser expression. Now in the context to which anthropology wholly relates, namely, the sphere of time and change, cause implies the notion of antecedence combined, as best may be, with the notion of necessity. If the anthropologist argues that the modern king is hedged in by a strict etiquette "because" the primitive king was sacred, or that we throw rice at weddings today "because" it was once a magico-religious way of imparting fertility, he means or ought to mean that not otherwise could the more recent institution have come into being. As it is, however, Origin may stand more or less indifferently for the merely historical or for the causal, for *post hoc* or *propter hoc*—modes of relation which it would be disastrous to identify offhand. Meanwhile, Origin, being at best a loose expression for cause, is likely to betray the would-be historian of origins into causal explanations unawares.

Now anthropology is at least history. It considers mankind as subject to time and change. Man in evolution—such is its favorite way of describing its object. Doubtless the term "evolution" tends to imply a progress rather than a simple process. The anthropologist, however, professes to be evolutionary primarily in the sense that he assumes a certain serial order, not by any means unilinear, to pervade the secular changes undergone by the human race. His first task, he would affirm, is to trace this order. Did he stop here, this task would be purely historical. But can he stop here? Is anthropology to correspond to what the word *ἀνθρωπολογία* means in Greek, namely, "gossip"? For in that case it would exist only to satisfy a wholly unpractical curiosity about mere particulars. Inevitably, then, the anthropologist allows a comfortable breadth to his interpretation of the standpoint of Origin. From beginning to cause—the transition, assisted by the ambiguity of the word Origin, is soon made. It becomes part of the anthropological creed that a certain necessity underlies the serial order of events into which human history has been unraveled; that the process, however complex, obeys an evolutionary law. Once admit, however, that all human lives are bound together as by a chain, a mood of unpractical curiosity no longer satisfies. In these leaves of the book of man, torn and fragmentary as they are, we may read our own fate. So much, then, for the standpoint of anthropology as desig-

nated by Origin. It is an interest in the history of mankind regarded both as history and as something more, namely, as a process with which we are ourselves in some sense causally connected and therefore practically concerned.

b) *Meaning of Validity.*—Validity means in general value or worth. The term, however, tends to have a special connotation. To be valid is not so much to be good as to hold good. Thus Lotze uses the equivalent word *Geltung* to signify the sort of value that attaches to an idea as such, namely, universality. Now for a principle to be valid in this sense, it might seem that it must be altogether independent of time and change. And indeed, it appears easy enough to think of certain propositions as holding good in this absolute way. Most people would allow that $2+2=4$ is valid everywhere and always; and, apart from mathematics, they might be almost as ready to concede a like validity to the ethical principle that "happiness implies virtue." Most people, on the other hand, would admit that the mere form of universality cannot justify the claim to absoluteness. On the face of it, $2+2=5$, or "vice is preferable to virtue" is no less free of limiting conditions. Some philosophers, however, would say that propositions of the latter type are immediately seen to be unthinkable. Speaking for myself, however, I must confess that my own way of testing such principles would be different. To contemplate them simply as ideas, with a view to discovering their validity, is a process likely in practice to generate a sort of mental stupor. So I should test them rather by inquiring whether they can be fruitfully applied to life or not. Further, even supposing it to be true that a few universal principles have an axiomatic validity such as must win instant and final acceptance from any mind which contemplates them fairly and squarely, yet it is clear that there are thousands of our ordinary judgments which we invest with the same form of universality without intending to imply any such necessity. I may say with all the sweep and emphasis of a universal judgment that "all men are fools," and yet come to recognize later on that I made the remark in haste. In regard, then, to this latter class of judgments, their validity, or value as ideas, is plainly relative to application, or in other words is conditioned by time and change. The form of universality

cloaks a merely hypothetical judgment—one that may be striving to rise above all limitations, but is none the less limited for all that. Here validity can mean no more than normality, or tendency to hold good. A judgment of this class is valid if, on the whole, it proves good enough to live by. Doubtless, the troubled mariner would prefer to steer by the everlasting stars. Failing their light, however, he is glad enough to lay his course by the shifting set of the tidal currents.

Can theology acquiesce in principles that, in respect of their validity, are less than absolute? Of course theology has a perfect right to prefer propositions of the axiomatic type. So would science, if it saw any chance (outside mathematics, at any rate) of obtaining them. Besides, theology has a special reason for this predilection. As the handmaid of religion, which is eminently practical and hence rooted in faith, theology is bound to try to supply logical certainties so that the practical certainties which religion needs may rest on firm foundations. Hence it has been inclined to ascribe infallibility now to the church, now to Scripture, now to some form of dogmatic philosophy. The very variety, however, of the means whereby assurance is sought sounds a note of uncertainty.

What, then, of theological principles that are less than absolute, that can claim only an empirical validity? It is at least theoretically possible that no others are available. The purpose of theology being to validate, to make good, the reality of the divine, two alternative theories concerning that reality have to be considered. One is that the divine nature is changeless. Even so, however, it will not necessarily be expressible in terms of a changeless definition or law for beings whose intelligence is in process of growth. Need it afford glimpses of itself that within certain limits show the divine nature for what it absolutely is? May not the validation (or, one might say, the revelation), while relating to the eternal, nevertheless make good the truth, not piecemeal, but rather by gradual approximation? The other possible view is that the divine nature is itself in evolution. On such a theory the divine experience, like the experience that we know in ourselves, would be eventually a trying. But if it were a dynamic movement of self-realization conditioned

by a real time, then any validation, or revelation, of it must surely be a dynamic process too. Only a pessimist would declare that, even so, human thought might still require certain unchanging universals round which to rally its streaming impressions. If these fixed points had no counterpart in the objective order, if God and the universe were moving on despite our pauses, miserable indeed would be man, the so-called rational animal.

So much for validity as representing the standpoint of the theologian. Some sort of intellectual certainty must be supplied by theology so as to support and undergird the practical certainty which religion must have. I have tried to show that, within the sphere of intellect itself, a practical or empirical certainty might be the only kind of certainty obtainable. Theology might thus have to acquiesce in a validation by means of trial and error, or, in other words, in an approximate and progressive form of revelation. It remains to be shown how in any case, though perhaps in that case especially, theology may profitably ally itself with science, and notably with anthropology, the science of human origins.

III. THE RELATION OF HISTORY AND SCIENCE TO PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

There are two points of view from which human nature may be envisaged, one of which let me call compendiously, if somewhat barbarously, the "historico-scientific," while the other may be named the "philosophico-religious." The former is the cardinal interest of anthropology, the latter that of theology.

The ideal relations between history and science for the one part and philosophy and religion for the other may be exhibited by arranging them in a sort of ascending scale. Of the four, history affords least insight into the nature of man, because its method of treatment is chronological. The historian may be conceived for our present purpose as a mere annalist, a recorder of passing events. Here he finds one serial order of facts to be chronicled and there another; and to make one out of the many ceases at a certain point to be his business. An anthropologist, for instance, who is content to play the mere historian will make out one history, let us say, for

pre-Columbian America and another for aboriginal Australia, without attempting to show their common bearing on the general evolution of man. We may say, then, that history as such is concerned with establishing a "that." Science, on the other hand, tries to go deeper. Thus, as regards the subject of man, its method is not chronological but comparative. It takes note of the points of likeness and difference displayed by this and that historical series with the object of determining general laws of seriation, of normal sequence or tendency. To a corresponding extent it is more abstract than history, because it seeks to distinguish in a given series of events the essential elements governing the development, while discarding the irrelevant details. So far then as science succeeds in discovering such a law of tendency, it may be said to yield a "how." And here we touch the limit of the anthropological ideal. It would embrace no more than "that" and "how"—the facts about man as facts, and as bound together according to their normal sequences. Beyond these limits one has the right to speak, not as an anthropologist, but, if at all, in some other capacity.

Passing on to philosophy, we may lay it down that its method is teleological. Its function is to supplement the "how" of science with a "why." Why? means What is the good? Such a question applies obviously to the facts of human history, but perhaps not so obviously to the facts of the material world. Nevertheless, it would be a poor kind of philosophy that knuckled down to any form of mere science, whether it be physical science or any other. After all, if we thought the subject-matter of any science of no good at all, we should lack all impulse to construct a science in regard to it. There is, however, a great contrast between the notions of law as they apply severally to the self-determining man and to an externally determined nature. Indeed, the problem of freedom *vs.* necessity is the most fundamental of philosophical difficulties. Nay, it is more than a problem; it is a crux, an insoluble antimony from the philosophic standpoint, because philosophy is merely a way of thinking. Because the problem will not think out, it does not follow that it cannot be lived out. Hence we need to move beyond philosophy to a still higher, and, in fact, the highest, plane of all. This is the plane of religion. Religion, to coin a word, is "teleo-

practical." Its function is to supplement "why" theoretical with "why" practical, to convert good as described by the mere intellect into such a form of good as may be absorbed into the economy of our thinking, feeling, and willing soul-life as a whole. All sound religion is optimistic. It answers the question "What is the good?" with an unhesitating "Why, all the good in the world." Of course it looks back for support to philosophy, just as philosophy looks back to science, and science to history. But it contributes more than it receives, being the higher synthesis, the fuller interpretation, which has come "not to destroy but to fulfil." Fact in detail, fact generalized, fact intellectually valued, fact vitally valued or, in other words, harmonized with the purposes of the best attainable life—such is the ascending scale which leaves religion in a position of highest authority, and of greatest responsibility.

Now theology is not religion, but only the philosophy of religion, though as such it is philosophy as it grapples with its most ultimate problems. Biblical studies by themselves do not make the theologian. He needs philosophy. He must be competent to throw light on such a question as how facts and values may be correlated, and may both together be conceived in terms of law as applicable to a world in evolution. When he has thought these things out as best he can, he may offer himself to religion as the intellectual guide it craves. Even so, however, he will find that he must, as it were, overtake religion. Religion cannot afford to wait until theology has made up its mind. Religion is the life of the serious man, and must perforce carry on, whether thought be at its side to render assistance, or, through loss of touch with the vital strivings of man, diverge into futile ideology. On the other hand, without help from the side of the intellect, religion will be but a blind force, and as such liable to terrible aberrations, as no one knows better than the student of religion in its more primitive forms.

Moreover, the philosophy which the theologian must profess is not simply the philosophy of God as distinct from that of man or of nature. Philosophy is one, and, to be philosophers, we must study it in all its aspects together. Let me suggest, then, that, so far from neglecting the philosophy of man, the theologian will do well to begin with it, and then proceed to the philosophy of nature, so as

finally to attain to a philosophy of God. The old maxim, "Know thyself," is a sound one. Philosophy, like charity, must begin at home. If one begin with the philosophy of nature, taking one's clues from the physical sciences, one is likely to be misled by the apparent serenity of the laws of matter and motion, and, as happens naturally enough in a materialistic age, to identify religion with the worship of a sort of cosmic machine. But there is even more serenity and strength to be discerned in human nature than in any machinery, man-made or cosmic, if only one can develop the eyes to see it there. When the theologian seeks to frame his final conception of the divine reality, he will be nearer the truth if he think of it less as a force than as a will. But to know it as a will, as free and purposive and creative, he must from the first know himself as man; that is to say, must ally himself with the study that views the history of human effort and advance both from without and from within, though chiefly from within.

IV. THE HISTORICO-SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF RELIGION

Definitions are relative to logical purposes. Hence the definition of religion that suits the historico-scientific purposes of anthropology is constructed solely in order to further the interests of the study of human origins. Now Origin, as we have seen, does not mean absolute beginning. The student of human origins begins wherever he most conveniently can. Now as one seeks to trace back the descent of man, one is brought up sharply at a certain point by a total lack of direct evidence. We know only the distinctively human. The pre-human is unknown, except in the way of pure speculation. Anthropology, therefore, has not much choice in the matter of a starting-point. It so understands its postulate of continuity that all the more important kinds of vital activity are treated as present in germ in the earliest known condition of man; whereas the pre-social, the pre-matrimonial, the pre-scientific, the pre-religious—all these are at best but possible aspects of the unknown pre-human character of the race.

Thus, for the anthropologist, religion is a universal attribute of man, because his historico-scientific purposes require him to have a free hand in the following up of origins right back to the point where

the direct evidence about human history breaks off. It may be well to remark in passing, however, that, when the anthropologist states every kind of man to be religious in the anthropological sense of the term, the theologian has no right to conclude that every kind of man is likewise religious in the theological sense of the term. The business of the philosopher-theologian is to identify religion, not with any kind of religion that any kind of man may profess, but with the right kind of religion a thinking kind of man ought to profess. To ignore the difference between the two standpoints is to confuse Origin with Validity. But, if it be remembered that anthropology is but a part of the propaedeutic of theology, no such trouble need arise. The anthropologist frames a definition of religion in view of certain strictly limited ends of his own.

What, then, is the anthropological definition of religion? Despite endless quarrels about words, it would seem that students of human origins are largely in agreement as regards the facts with which religion has to do. These facts belong partly to the subjective and partly to the objective order, and yet are so related that a certain quality is common to them all. To express this common quality I know no better term than "sacredness."¹ The religious life is sacred, and the objects that sustain it are likewise sacred. Religion draws its sustenance from two roots at once—from ourselves and from the not-ourselves. This two-sidedness or polarity of the sacred must be noted at the start, because we are thus prepared to expect a certain ambiguity in the forms in which it is historically manifested. Some of its most characteristic manifestations let us now consider.

Under conditions of primitive culture sacredness reveals itself both negatively and positively, both by contrast and by direct experience. Thus, on the one hand, the need is felt to break away from common things, to embark on a *vita nuova*, to cross a threshold and commune with what has hitherto been hidden as behind a veil. From this point of view consecration is a conversion. Positively, however, we have yet to learn what this change of front brings with it. What fruition ensues upon conversion—what access of vitality and force—what profit in the way of knowledge or friendship? When such a positive characterization of sacredness is given

¹ See my article on "Religion (primitive)" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed.

in terms of the experience that it involves, we are nearer to its true nature, because we envisage it no longer from without but from within. At the risk of repeating what I have elsewhere treated more fully, and with a better chance of illustrating my meaning by examples, I must say something more about these two aspects of the sacred in turn.

First let us as anthropologists examine sacredness in its negative capacity. In three ways is the insufficiency of ordinary life asserted by contrast with a mode of life which is somehow other. This otherness is variously indicated by saying that the sacred is supernatural; that it is separated; and that it is esoteric.

When the sacred is said to be supernatural, it is regarded as non-natural and at the same time higher or better than the natural. Nature stands for the whole order of commonplace happenings in respect to which reasonable expectation is normally satisfied. Whatever falls outside this order is non-natural. As such, it may affect mankind favorably or unfavorably. Both miracles of healing and "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" belong to this sphere of influence. Nay, since the savage, like his civilized brother, tends to take "the blessings of Providence" as a matter of course, whereas any mishap strikes him as unaccountable and portentous in the last degree, it comes about that the supernatural and the untoward are found in especially close association at the primitive level of thought. At any rate, the bad supernaturalism is likely, for the peoples of the lower culture, to obtrude itself of its own accord; whereas the good supernaturalism has usually to be invoked by them by way of counterblast. Thus, if the presence of the supernatural always operates with primitive folk as a call to the serious life, it is for the most part primarily a call to wrestle with the powers of darkness, and only secondarily and by way of consequence a call to seek alliance with the powers of light. In any case, dualism is paramount—a system of devils and gods conceived in sheer antithesis. It is only the more advanced religions that try to reconcile the appearance of evil in the world with the reality of good as expressed in the divine nature. Meanwhile, in early religion, the supernatural in either aspect begets seriousness inasmuch as it spells crisis. Savage life has few safeguards, while crisis is

everywhere. Hence every department of activity tends to be pervaded with a sense of the supernatural and sacred. Whenever the careless animal is put off and the circumspect man put on, be it in food-getting or in fighting, in merrymaking or in mating, then a touch of consecration is imparted, though it comes in the first instance as a touch of the spur, as something that goads him out of his natural jog-trot pace. Moreover, the history of religion would seem to show that the more the pace is quickened the more man comes to appreciate it. At any rate, the more his religious thought develops the more does man tend to perceive God rather than the devil behind the crises that he is forced to face.

Again, whatever is sacred is held to be separated off from the profane. The subject of primitive taboo is too vast for justice to be done to it here. Taking a great deal for granted, however, one may venture to affirm that, just as the supernatural is primarily conceived rather as bad than as good, so that which is taboo is forbidden to the profane crowd rather lest it hurt them than lest they hurt it. The profane are those who are living the ordinary careless animal life. If a certain food, for instance, is "profane," it simply means that anyone may eat it anyhow. Taboo, on the other hand, spells fear. One eats a tabooed food at one's peril. Now fear in itself may be a bad thing, but as an ingredient in an emotional complex it has its uses. Reverence, for example, or the sense of discipline, would be impossible but for the dash of fear that they contain. So it comes about that, by association with other emotional elements, the taboo-feeling proves a beneficent factor in religious evolution. Combined with curiosity, admiration, affection, and so forth, it in every case deepens and enlarges the feeling by introducing an element of self-restraint. A certain humility helps rather than hinders the serious life, since it invests the sacred with dignity, protecting it from the familiarity that would otherwise breed contempt. This is especially noticeable when the taboo-feeling fuses with the sense of social obligation. Sacredness and the customary sanction join forces, so that each lends a new majesty to the other. Thereupon, by a curious reaction, the sacred is no longer avoided merely lest the profane be injured, but, on the strength of the majesty bound up with its obligatoriness, it must be

avoided by the profane lest they soil and contaminate it. As religion advances, the latter becomes more and more the prevailing aspect in which the sacred is viewed. Its dangerous character fades out of sight, while its remoteness and inviolability are increasingly felt to be the marks of exalted worth. Correspondingly fear develops into reverence.

Thirdly, the sacred is treated as esoteric. Distinguishable from the taboo-feeling, though in some ways akin to it, is the tendency to deal with it secretively. Now the bad side of the esotericism which is so typical of all primitive religion is obvious. Hocus-pocus and terrorism follow in its train. Yet the effort to shield the intimacies of religious experience from the prying gaze of the unsympathetic is not less justifiable than it is natural. Religion must always preserve something of the character of a mystery, if only because the capacity for religious experience is different in different men, and their sympathy is likely to be limited in like degree. Thus, with the advance of religious evolution, though esotericism on the whole loses ground in face of what may be termed the catholic idea, the individual consciousness asserts a certain claim to privacy of worship and communion; and God is conceived, not indeed to listen to personal petitions that are purely selfish, but nevertheless to "hear in secret."

So much, then, for the negative aspects of the sacred. Now it is plain that to exclaim "Marvelous!" or "Beware!" or "Hush!" in the presence of the sacred tells us directly nothing more than that there is something at hand which must be regarded with special attention. What has yet to be shown is not merely that it is other, but how it is other. We need not be surprised, however, if primitive theology turns out to be deficient on the positive side, seeing that even advanced theology is relatively weak in the matter of constructive theory. Certain characterizations of the sacred, however, occur in savage thought which attribute positive quality to it in a rather tentative way. These may likewise be considered under three heads.

First, the sacred is powerful. Of all the positive ideas that center in the notion of the sacred, that of a transcendent power is, perhaps, the most fundamental. Whether it bring weal or bring

woe, in any case a mighty force is held to be at work. This sense of a power in men and things that surpasses the ordinary is the common root whence spring the rival developments of magic and religion. Both involve supernaturalisms. Both are traffickings on the part of man with the "super" element in the universe; only magic is the bad kind of trafficking and religion the good kind. I can only sketch in outline here a view of the relation between magic and religion which I have tried to justify at length in *The Threshold of Religion* and elsewhere.¹ Suffice it to say that the power which at first is conceived somewhat ambiguously as working weal or woe in a transcendent way comes gradually to reflect the moral quality attaching to man's attitude toward it. It is magical and bad, if man draws near to it in a masterful and overbearing spirit, if he uses it but to exploit it. On the other hand, it is religious and good, if the applicant for favor and grace is filled with a spirit of reverence, if, in the Iroquois phrase, he "lays down his own power" in its presence. It comes to this, that so long as man falls short of the perfect love that waits on perfect understanding he cannot afford to cast out fear, in the shape of humility and self-restraint. These virtues are the springs of the serious life, whereas a crass self-satisfaction is its bane. The life of the evolving man, the life of spiritual effort and advance, is conditioned by fear and hope—by the fear of self and by the hope of overcoming self with the help of something higher.

Next, the sacred is conceived as personal. Now power is not necessarily personal, and therefore comparable in quality with the will-power that we know in ourselves. There is power of a kind in poison, or in strong drink. In primitive religion, then, there appears at times a tendency to identify the bad kind of supernatural power with a sort of poison and the good kind with a sort of stimulant. In magic especially, where the human operator's mood is masterful, it is easy to represent the end sought as the control of an occult force no more personal in its mode of action than the force attributed by the old alchemist to his *elixir vitae* or his philosopher's stone. Even in religion, at the savage level at all events, a more

¹ See *The Threshold of Religion*, 2d ed., 1914, chaps. ii-iv; also "Magic or Religion?" in *The Edinburgh Review*, April, 1914.

or less impersonal grace may be acquired by contact with sacred objects. Thus the cult of the sacred bull-roarer or *churinga* is the very soul of the religion of Central Australia. Physical contact, as by rubbing on the stomach, causes a man to be "glad" and "good" and "strong." It is true that these sacred objects are vaguely connected with ancestors, with sacred animals, and so on. But to become "full of *churinga*," as the native phrase puts it, would seem to be largely an end in itself. I am therefore inclined to think that to attribute personality to the sacred is less fundamental, from the standpoint of the study of religious origins, than to attribute power. Even certain phases of advanced religion, for instance Buddhism, show that it is possible to conceive the divine in a largely or wholly impersonal way. Nevertheless I believe that to construe the power ascribed to the sacred as the power of a superhuman will is the normal tendency of human religion as it becomes reflective. As thought gradually concentrates more on the end of religion and less exclusively on the means—and all forms of intellectual advance display this tendency—divine power is no longer regarded as inherent primarily in ceremonies and ceremonial objects, but these things are treated as mere vehicles of communication between the mind of man and the mind of a Being not only able but willing to be man's helper.

Lastly, the sacred is good. For, whereas the magician tends to stand alone, and is deservedly a pariah because he plays for his own hand, religious men tend to associate in brotherhoods so that every form of social union, the family, the clan, the tribe itself, is in some sense a church as well. Thus, from the first, religion is associated with the ethics of social obligation, and the divine in its transcendent way makes for the common welfare as a matter of course. Now the social and the ethical are not to be identified offhand; and that private good is not necessarily selfish is gradually but slowly borne in upon the religious consciousness. The destruction of the pagan system of classical antiquity at the hands of Christianity, or the Lutheran Reformation, may be regarded as in large part due to the protest of the individual conscience against too much socialism in religion. But there has been no going back on the old-world instinct against private contracts with the gods. The serious life

may seem to lift the individual clean out of the world of human affairs, but even so he is bound to try to take the rest of humanity with him.¹

Here must perforce cease what cannot be more than a very summary account, from the standpoint of anthropology, of that notion of sacredness which I believe to be the best working clue to the interpretation of the vast complex of beliefs and practices summed up under the name of primitive religion.

V. THE BEARING OF THE HISTORICO-SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF RELIGION ON THE VIEW OF THE PHILOSOPHER-THEOLOGIAN

What moral is the philosopher-theologian to draw from the foregoing sketch of the tendencies at work in historical religion? As an anthropologist, I am inclined to break off abruptly at this point. Yet, though I am innocent of any desire to give the theologian a lead, it is perhaps only fair that I should state very briefly how it seems to me that my Origin and his Validity stand in a certain significant relation to each other.

Put very shortly, the moral of the history of primitive religion would seem to be this—that religion is all along vital to man as a striving and progressive being. My point is not merely that there is always to be found something that the anthropologist would call religion; because, as has been already said, that is largely a question of words, the universality of religion being implied in his postulate of continuity. But enough has been said to show that, corresponding to the anthropologist's wide use of the term "religion," there is a real sameness, felt all along, if expressed with no great clearness at first, in the characteristic manifestations of the religious consciousness at all times and in all places. It is the common experience of man that he can draw on a power that makes for, and in its most typical form wills, righteousness, the sole condition being that a certain fear, a certain shyness and humility, accompany the effort so to do. That such a universal belief exists amongst all mankind, and that it is no less universally helpful in the highest degree, is the

¹ On the relation between religion and ethics in primitive society see also my article on "Ethics (rudimentary)" in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. J. Hastings, Vol. V. especially *ad fin.*

abiding impression left on my mind by the study of religion in its historico-scientific aspect.

But is such a belief not only helpful but true? The philosopher-theologian in his search for the valid has to ask himself this further question, whether the anthropologist can throw light on it or not. Now there is a danger lest the anthropologist, limiting himself as he has a perfect right to do to the standpoint of science, proceed illegitimately to conclude that the standpoint is final, not merely for him, but in an absolute sense. Thus Sir James Frazer, after showing in his brilliant little book entitled *Psyche's Task* that primitive religion (he usually misnames it superstition) has proved useful to mankind in all sorts of ways, ends feebly with the assertion that it is a mere will-o'-the-wisp; for all that, it has shown on the whole a marvelous faculty of keeping away from the boggy spots and illuminating the ground that can be trusted. Now I imagine that Sir James Frazer pronounces religion to be an illusion because it seems to him to fail to acquiesce in what he is pleased to regard as the laws of nature. Such positivism, however, which treats the mere "how" of science as likewise an all-sufficient "why," is due to the failure to realize that science as such generalizes the observable tendencies of men and things without alleging any real necessity whatever. Philosophy, on the other hand, which is essentially teleological in its function, may well doubt whether there is any necessity which does not at the same time imply will. Even those necessities of thought on which all other necessary truth depends are the outcome of a will to think.

For the rest, it need not unduly trouble us that primitive religion has generated much evil by the way. Experience is experiment, as the psychologists say, and that truth emerges out of error holds good of religion no less than of every other form of the strenuous life. There is at any rate no difficulty in holding this from the standpoint of the historian of religion who treats it as something that has evolved and is still evolving. Now the philosophy of religion, as has been said above, shows a decided preference for some axiomatic and final form of religious truth; so that it may perhaps tend to deny that the development of belief has any bearing on its validity. But the last word, fortunately, is not with theology but

with religion. While theologians prate that religious truth is unalterable, behold it is growing and expanding before their very eyes. Religion is in evolution, nay, is the very rationale of evolution, since it construes what otherwise were simple process into a progress lighted by faith in the ideal. It is such a faith, I believe, that validates religion. The belief in the value of science is part of that faith, but a part only. Science, therefore, may join with theology in doing honor to the virtue of humility, whereby both may avoid dogmatism and advance by the joint aid of faith and experience.